

Top Tips

1. This entire book is longer than the play itself! You do NOT need to know everything, as a lot is surprisingly obvious, and after a little practise, language analysis begins to become natural
2. There are a ridiculous amount of quotes – just memorizing half of them will probably account for any eventuality in the exam, but it is important to do so
3. English is all about plagiarising, so feel free to copy ideas, and even points out of this book, as I'm sure many people have the same interpretation as I do, and will do again!
4. Don't print it out – 47 pages is a lot of paper and ink, so it's best to use it from a phone, tablet, or computer

DISCLAIMER: There may be a few mistakes here and there, so don't expect it to be word perfect – if you find anything, please let me know at harry@docu.co.uk

Finally, I am a student, who has collaborated with many teachers to make this a reality, and have put over 70 hours of work into it. The struggle is as real for me as it is for you, and I hope that you will find it as helpful and clear as I have.

Hope the exams go well!

Harry

- ⇒ The fact that the witches have met again, in thunder and rain, shows that the importance of the power of fate, directly referring to Sc. 1 (i.e. "In thunder, lightning, or rain?")

"Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again, to make up nine."

- After referring to themselves as the "The weird sisters", amplifying their mysterious nature, the anaphora of "thrice" and the contrast between "thine" and "mine" could show how although it may seem as if the witches serve others, they only do things for their own benefit, which can be seen further on in the play
- Shakespeare's use of rhyming when the witches speak could augment how rhyming is seen throughout the play as unheimlich and augments the paradoxical contrast between "thine" and "mine" (the words look similar but they refer to different things)

"So foul and fair a day I have not seen"

- Shakespeare's repetition of the foreboding phrase "foul and fair" emphasises the witches' ability to predict the future to an extent, as well as showing how Macbeth is influenced by this
- The use of the denying phrase "I have not seen" could show how rare the weather surrounding the witches' is, making it seem less likely that it is a coincidence
- Instead, it could be nature's reaction to the witches, who disturb the natural order in predicting the future, indirectly portraying nature as sentient

"1st: All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Glamis"

2nd: All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor."

3rd: All hail Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter."

- Here, the witches are depicted making a prophecy for the first time – Shakespeare's repetition of the ominous phrase "All hail Macbeth" could show that they are in a trance, overcome by spirits
- The witches present this information in such a way that Macbeth will ultimately trust them, as they begin with something that is true – he is the "Thane of Glamis".
- Shakespeare then repeats the beckoning phrase "All hail Macbeth, hail to thee," in order to present the prophecy as if it is the truth, reducing the chance that Macbeth will doubt it
- Perhaps if the witches had just predicted that Macbeth will be king, he would have dismissed it, but the tone of the witches and their portrayal of the prophecy makes this moment pivotal in the play's development
- Interestingly, the witches choose to tell Macbeth this, instead of Banquo. This is probably because he is the brave war hero, but if Banquo was told this instead, would he have followed the path that Macbeth will ultimately follow to his death?

"Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear ..."

- Shakespeare uses the negative description "neither beg nor fear" to augment the validity of the witches' prophecy, as they are not demanding anything in return, and don't cower before Macbeth, suggesting that they feel they are above him
- Here, Banquo could be portrayed as jealous of Macbeth, almost as if he feels as Macbeth has been chosen above him, which could create a rivalry between the two characters.

“The repetition in a woman’s ear
Would murder as it fell. –”

- The objectifying use of “woman” here shows how Macduff believed that a woman would be more overcome with grief than a man if he were to tell her of the passing of the king
- This was not sexist at the time, as the contemporary audience would not have had this concept – society at the time was dominated by men (i.e. patriarchal hegemony)
- Perhaps he does not want to tell Lady Macbeth for fear of killing her; this fear of blood on his hands continues right up until the last few scenes in the play
- However, Macduff’s opinion of Lady Macbeth’s strength is completely contrary to her true nature, as she called upon evil spirits to remove her womanly traits to make her stronger – Lady Macbeth too has a façade

“Too cruel, anywhere.

Dear Duff, I prithee contradict thyself
And say it is not so”

- Following Lady Macbeth’s fake shock “Woe, alas, ...”, trying to portray her innocence, Banquo begs Macduff to tell him that this is untrue – he has entered a stage of denial
- However, Lady Macbeth does not appear to be in a stage of grief – her tone is more confused, perhaps emphasising that she is not overcome with grief
 - FIVE STAGES of GRIEF: Developed by Kübler-Ross and introduced in 1969, the theory postulates that most people, when faced with grief, go through five stages
 - These stages are Denial, which Banquo clearly feels here; Anger, which Macduff channels when ringing the alarm; Bargaining; Depression; and Acceptance

“Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had liv’d a blessed time, ...
There’s nothing serious in mortality”

- Macbeth appears to wish that Duncan’s death had never happened, and Shakespeare’s use of serious and profound statements such as “There’s nothing serious in mortality” emphasises and validates his grief to the other characters
- The use of conditional language such as “Had I but...” could show that Macbeth is in a bargaining stage of denial, furthermore augmenting the validity of his shock and therefore dramatic irony
- The use of the emotive statement “There’s nothing serious in mortality” could be a way of Macbeth stating that life is worthless, having discovered the death of his king. However, his subtle tone could demonstrate that he feels life is worth more, as there is an opportunity for Macbeth to become king

“Who can be wise, amaz’d, temp’rate, and furious,
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man.”

- Here, Shakespeare’s use of a list of contrasting adjectives demonstrates how Macbeth attempts to validate and excuse his behaviour in killing the guards, by stating how overcome he was by Duncan’s death

- Her tone could portray the witches as insecure; the only reason they give Macbeth attention and help is because they want attention, although Hecate tells them otherwise

“Thither he
Will come to know his destiny.
...Unto a dismal and fatal end.”

- Hecate tells the witches to reveal Macbeth's peripeteia to him, securing it in the process (reference to story of Oedipus?)
- Repetition of 'al' sounds in “dismal” and “fatal” end emphasises his demise from a popular war hero to a hated tyrant, referring to the unheroic nature of his death

“And you all know, security
Is mortals' chiefest enemy.”

- Hecate states that security is an enemy of human beings, as it prevents them from being tempted into evil or swayed in opinion
- Similar to the attitude of Satan, who tempted men and women by showing them the future and playing on their fear of loss (i.e. loss of security)

- ⇒ Hecate speaks in iambic tetrameter, which is different to most of the rest of the play, emphasising the unusual nature of her appearance and her mysterious style of speech
- ⇒ Throughout the play, Shakespeare used genuine spells thought to be used at the time – it has been said that this angered the witches, making them curse the play in response, making the suspicious believe that it is bad luck for the play/word “Macbeth” to be mentioned before putting on a show

SCENE 6

- Lennox and an unnamed lord discuss the recent demise of Scotland, in ironic terms, after Macbeth became king
- He examines the recent accidents of both Duncan's and Banquo's death, concluding that Macbeth instigated them in the subtext

“Whom you may say, if't please you, Fleance kill'd, ...”

- Lennox has an ironic tone when discussing the reasons for the demise of Banquo
- The use of the sceptical phrase “if't please you” could show how the people of Scotland convince themselves that Macbeth is good, almost lying to themselves instead of facing the bitter truth that their king is a murderer
- Lennox's apparently sudden change of heart is a direct consequence of Macbeth's behaviour at the banquet – he has lost the respect of his lords

- ⇒ Shakespeare uses scenes 5 & 6 to decrease the focus of the events of the play, and look at the wider picture, contrasting with the violent and aggressive nature of scene 4
- ⇒ He uses this scene especially to directly show the consequences of Macbeth's rule throughout Scotland and how the people that he rules see him

“Macduff lives in disgrace. Sir, can you tell
Where he bestows himself?”

“He [the first apparition] will not be commanded”

- Although he does not truly know it, Macbeth is not in control, and never has been – he begins to realise that he may have asked for more than he originally wanted
 - Written in passive (“be commanded”), to divorce the witches from the apparition itself, so they are not to blame?
 - Alternatively, the prophecies describe unnatural events coming to pass (e.g. until Birnan Wood comes to Dunsinane, etc.) that will destroy Macbeth, so it could show that Macbeth is actually natural and not on the side of the witches
 - He goes on to contradict himself in an uncertain tone when he decides what to do about Macduff – he is afraid of him and his power
- Macbeth is so full of arrogance that he places himself outside of the mortal way of life, almost as if he thinks he is a God, believing that the witches’ prophecies will never come to pass; he exists as he thinks
 - He, therefore, taunts the devil, believing that none can harm him – this is his moment of false pride (HUBRIS)

“Show his eyes and grieve his heart”

- Juxtaposition of what he wants and his greatest fear – the paranoia of the unknown results in him finding out that the witches’ prophecy, that the sons of Banquo will become kings, becomes true
- The ghosts provide a direct reference to James I as an ancestor of Banquo himself – the thought of the crown being on anyone other than himself (let alone Banquo’s sons), is too much for Macbeth

“Thy crown does seer mine eyeballs.”

- First use of the word ‘eyeballs’ in the English language
- A physical representation of the pain felt by Macbeth seeing the crown on someone else

“Stand eye accursed in the calendar”

- He wants to curse this day, after the realisation of his downfall – this was not uncommon in medieval times for people of power
- The concept of a curse was part of Jacobean culture, so the contemporary audience could very possibly consider this as a real concept
- His opinion of the witches has changed to anger, and he wants to spread his anger using this curse

SCENE 2

- Lady Macduff is with her son and Ross (a thane of Scotland). Ross tells her that Macduff has fled to England, and Lady Macduff accuses her husband of cowardice
- Ross makes his excuses and leaves. Afterwards, a messenger arrives, warns them of danger, and leaves
- Murderers enter, kill Macduff’s son, and pursue Lady Macduff to kill her

- At the start of the scene, Macbeth plans to starve the enemy to victory, satisfied with the knowledge that he is untouchable
- It is quite possible that Dunsinane could survive a siege, but the chance of this is greatly reduced by Macbeth's negligence to plan, act, or fight

"She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow"

- Macbeth regrets the time of Lady Macbeth's death, as he knows that there is no time to mourn now, but there was before this moment, and there would be afterwards
- The tricolon "Tomorrow, and ... tomorrow" exemplifies Macbeth's emotional struggle, perhaps with intention of making us feel sorry for him

"Out, out, brief candle,"

- The candle could be representative of Macbeth's brief goodness and all his hopes, but now his bravado and boasting have disappeared, reduced to empty words
- He portrays life as futile and deceptive, knowing that all who were good and loyal to him have now turned against him – he is truly alone, augmenting the irony that although he got what he wanted most, he lost everything else

"Life's but a walking shadow, ...
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing."

- Macbeth turns to cynicism as a final response to the death of Lady Macbeth and his actions: his emotional state is in contrast to his indifferent and emotionless opinion
- Shakespeare amplifies the pathos felt for Macbeth here, as he is depicted entirely alone and suffering

"I look'd toward Birnan and anon methought
The wood began to move."

- Macbeth now realises that the witches have tricked him, waking him up to the ongoing events, to a certain extent, as he now doubts his destiny
- His violent response "Liar and slave!" shows that he truly feels in danger, in stark contrast to his mournful tone a few lines before
- The prophecies start to unravel as the inevitability of Macbeth's death is increased

"If thou speak'st false,
Upon the next tree shall thou hang alive"

- His erratic behaviour has returned, as he knows that it has come to pass, so he acts and behaves out of fear for his life
- His terrifying nature has now descended into madness as Shakespeare makes us simply wait for him to die

“Thou wast born of woman.
But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,
Brandish'd by man that's of a woman born”

- Although the first prophecy has come to pass, Macbeth still trusts the witches, perhaps because he thinks that the witches could not trick him, or because they told him the truth to begin with (i.e. “Hail Macbeth, ..., that shalt be king...”)
- He continues to speak in rhyming couplets, almost as if he is on the side of the witches themselves

“Tyrant, show thy face!
... My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.”

- Shakespeare uses the confident exclamation “show thy face!” to describe how Macduff will welcome a fight with Macbeth, wanting to avenge his family
- The use of the unheimlich imagery of “wife and children's ghosts” suggests that his intentions are to ease his conscience – the audience know, all too well, that ghosts are quite possibly a reality in the play (i.e. Banquo's ghost III. 5)
- Nevertheless, Macduff's murderous intentions still contrast with that of Macbeth's dark desires at the start of the play, because he has a compelling reason to want to kill Macbeth (out of vengeance), whereas Macbeth committed regicide only for his greed and ambition

“This way, my lord; the castle's gently render'd.”

- Siward's of the respectful address “my lord” shows how Malcolm, although he is not king, commands respect, drawing a contrast with Macbeth who, even as king, has to demand respect
- ⇒ Shakespeare's use of fateful language such as “render'd” suggests that he uses this scene in order to prepare the audience for the necessity that is the death of Macbeth's death in the subsequent scene

SCENE 8

- Macbeth is finally killed by Macduff, partly in revenge for the death of his family, but also to cleanse Scotland and free it from his reign of terror
- The witches have at last betrayed him to his death, as he betrayed his friend Duncan at the start of the play

“Turn, hell-hound, turn”

- Another use of hellish imagery to describe Macbeth – he truly has fallen into darkness – hell may now be better than the world he is living in, from his perspective
- Repetition of “Turn” emphasises how Macduff treats Macbeth as if he is an animal – no longer human due to his actions, emphasising his self-destruction

“Despair thy charm,
...Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripped”